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and of the United Nations
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 16 February 1994, at 11 a.m.

President: Mr. ANSARI (India)

CONTENTS

Organization of the work of the Executive Board (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (continued)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the Bureau had formulated a proposal regarding the schedule of Executive Board meetings for the year. On 18 March, an informal briefing would be held with resident representatives, immediately prior to their meeting, followed by a regular session of the Executive Board from 10 to 13 May. As for the annual session, in the light of the views expressed by delegations and the rules of procedure, the Bureau proposed that the Governing Council's decision in that regard should be maintained for 1994 and that the Executive Board should meet in Geneva from 6 to 17 June, without prejudice to any decision it might take at that time on the provisions of the rules of procedure governing the venue for the Board's meetings. The dates of 28 to 30 September had been suggested for a third regular session, but the Bureau would like to explore the possibility of meeting from 5 to 7 October, between the high-level segment of the General Assembly and the start of the Second Committee's work. A regular session was proposed for 10 to 13 January 1995.

2. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that the Group of 77 should be consulted in order to avoid any conflict between the dates of its annual meeting and the proposed October session.

3. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway) drew attention to the need for continuity in the work of the Executive Board. In the view of his delegation, regular sessions should be spread out over the year in order to ensure that dialogue was maintained. The meeting proposed for 18 March would be more efficient if it could be a regular meeting where decisions could be taken, although not all delegations would be able to be represented. Because the period from September to January was quite lengthy, he wondered if a regular meeting could be held in November, if necessary.

4. The PRESIDENT said that the objective of the proposed March meeting was an informal exchange with resident representatives regarding conditions in the field. The secretariat would be involved in preparation for the resident representatives' meeting and would be unable to prepare for an Executive Board session at the same time. It was clear, from the response to the proposal of the Bureau, that sessions should be held on as close to a quarterly basis as possible. Since the Executive Board was in its first year, the schedule could be fine-tuned in the light of experience.

5. Mr. PEDERSEN (Denmark) acknowledged the constraints on holding a full Board session in March, but suggested that only country programmes already prepared should be taken up at that time. The session should be extended to include 17 March. His delegation also would have preferred holding more than one regular session between the annual session and January 1995.

6. Mr. SPETH (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme) said that the meeting of resident representatives was an unusual event of very great importance, and full advantage must be taken of the opportunity it presented. An informal meeting between the Executive Board and the resident representatives would be a good use of resources, but it would be very difficult for UNDP senior management staff to prepare for a full Board session at the same time.

7. Ms. DOWSETT (New Zealand) said that her delegation had already expressed its strong views on the venue of future annual sessions. It believed that the "headquarters rule" should apply to UNDP, for administrative and financial reasons, but also in order to ensure the broadest possible participation. However, it was prepared to accept the proposal to hold the June session at Geneva on the understanding that the choice of that venue was an exception and was without prejudice to any future decisions. She requested more details on the actual costs and levels of participation for both New York and Geneva.

8. Mr. CABEIRO-QUINTANA (Cuba) said that the proposed March meeting should remain an informal discussion; it would be detrimental to the efficiency of the secretariat to keep it in a constant state of preparation for Board meetings.

9. Mrs. VASISHT (India) said that her delegation accepted the proposal of the Bureau. Converting the March meeting to a formal session would pose a problem for her delegation, which might not be able to participate. Since the meeting of resident representatives was not a yearly event, holding a formal session in conjunction with it would set a precedent that could not be maintained. As a developing country, India's resources would be sufficient to cover only the four sessions proposed.

10. Ms. RIBEIRO-VANDERAUWERA (Belgium) said that her delegation supported the proposal of the Bureau. Executive Board meetings approximately every three months would be acceptable, but more frequent meetings might place a strain on the human and financial resources of delegations.

11. Mr. JALLOW (Gambia) said that his delegation supported the proposed schedule of meetings and favoured an informal meeting in March. Discussions with the resident representatives would be of great benefit and would help in the preparations for the annual session in June. Too many meetings however, would not be helpful to smaller delegations. Board meetings were of great interest to recipient countries, but holding meetings that they were unable to attend could be counterproductive.

12. Mr. GORELIK (Russian Federation) welcomed the proposed schedule of meetings for the coming year and the efforts of the Bureau to resolve the question of the venue of the annual session to the satisfaction of all. He agreed with the representative of New Zealand that the substantive discussion on that issue should not be initiated until the rules of procedure had been reviewed. However, Geneva was the home of many specialized agencies of the United Nations system involved in the implementation of development programmes and was, therefore, the logical place to hold the Executive Board session. During the current period of budgetary restraint, the number of days allocated for all Board sessions combined should not exceed the number authorized for the former Governing Council.

13. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that the Bureau's recommendations were an acceptable compromise. Adequate time had been provided to cover the Board's projected workload and additional meetings could be requested, if necessary. She therefore appealed to delegations to accept the proposals and to move on to the consideration of other items.

14. Mr. PASHA (Pakistan) said that his delegation had been satisfied with the secretariat's earlier proposal. If implemented, the new recommendations would make it difficult for members to follow up the Board's decisions. As for the duration of the annual session, two weeks would be adequate. He agreed with the delegation of Morocco that the scheduling of meetings from 5 to 7 October should be reviewed, given the special demands of the General Assembly period.

15. Mr. RAMOUL (Observer for Algeria) said that, in order to avoid scheduling problems, particularly for the developing countries, the Group of 77 should be consulted before the Board determined the dates of its meetings in October.

16. Mr. Yeong Hyeon LEE (Republic of Korea) said that it would be useful to know the costs of holding the annual session at Geneva and in New York, respectively. Holding the regular session in June was acceptable to his delegation.

17. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) said that, while it was tempting to transform the March meetings into a regular session of the Board, the Administration of the United Nations Development Programme should be focusing at that time on its meeting with the resident representatives. He shared the view of the Canadian delegation that the Board should adopt a flexible approach to the organization of its work.

18. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) said that the Bureau's recommendations and New Zealand's proviso that the choice of venue for the June session was without prejudice to future decisions were acceptable to his delegation. With regard to the number of annual sessions, he agreed with the Cuban delegation that the scheduling of too many sessions would make it difficult for the secretariat to deal with its normal workload. Many issues could in fact be settled through informal discussions.

19. Mr. YAO Wen Long (China) said that the Bureau's proposals were reasonable and therefore acceptable to his delegation.

20. Mr. ACHA (Peru) said that the holding of regular sessions alternately at Headquarters and at Geneva was not an efficient use of resources. New York was the more appropriate venue, since the presence of permanent missions to the Organization facilitated follow-up activities, particularly by the developing countries. Responding to the argument that a number of relevant United Nations organizations were located at Geneva, he said that it was easier for those organizations to send representatives to New York than for the developing countries to send representatives to Geneva. The efficiency of the Board depended on how its work was organized and not on the number of its meetings. He, too, believed that it was time to move on to other, more substantive items on the agenda.

21. Mr. ABIBI (Congo) said that his delegation accepted the Bureau's compromise proposals. The work of the Board should be organized in such a way as to ensure the participation of all countries, particularly the developing countries and observer States.

22. Mr. MONROE (United States of America) said that the proposed meeting schedule for the current period of transition was generally acceptable to his delegation, although he was sympathetic to New Zealand's caveat concerning future venues of the regular session.

23. Mr. NEUMANN (Germany) said that the Board should endorse the Bureau's recommendations and be ready to learn from its experiences in 1994. It was time to move on to the consideration of more substantive items.

24. Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the Bureau's recommendations and the proviso introduced by New Zealand were broadly acceptable to his delegation. However, the meetings scheduled for 5 to 7 October would conflict with the ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and the Board should therefore revert to the dates in September which had been proposed earlier.

25. Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that the Bureau's proposals were reasonable and acceptable to his delegation. For future meetings, however, it might be better to follow the practice of other United Nations bodies and arrange for the organizational session to be followed by the regular session. With regard to the report to the Economic and Social Council, he hoped that, in future, that report would be considered by the regular session of the Board before submission to the Council. There must now be a break with previous practice in which the secretariat basically compiled the various decisions of the Governing Council and submitted them to the Economic and Social Council.

26. The PRESIDENT said that the Board's recommendations had been motivated by a concern for efficiency and practicality. The dates agreed upon at the current session were not immutable and could be reviewed, if necessary. The Board was in a period of transition and needed to retain a flexible approach to its methods of work. It was important to approve the schedule for 1994, after which other questions, such as the venue for the 1994 regular session, could be decided. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Board wished to adopt the proposals of the Bureau concerning the organization of the work of the Executive Board.

27. It was so decided.

28. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board), replying to questions asked, said that, in general, meetings of all resident representatives were held once every five years; in 1994, the meeting was being advanced because of the reorganization that was taking place. A paper comparing the costs of holding meetings at Geneva and in New York had been circulated in 1993; it was unlikely that there had been any significant change in the cost estimates. On the question of the Board's report to the Economic and Social Council, he said that the Council had not yet determined how it would consider such reports; more information would be available by the time of the annual session.

29. With regard to the documentation for future sessions, a paper had been circulated showing the division of labour between the annual session and the regular sessions of the Board. At the May session, the Board could consider the country programmes which had originally been prepared for the February session (Albania and Slovakia); a number of country programmes had been prepared for June and as many of them as possible would be moved to the May session, although it could not be guaranteed that all of them would be available. At the May

(Mr. Graisse)

session there would be an overview of the mid-term reviews relating to India, Indonesia and Zambia and, if possible, the mid-term reviews relating to Cape Verde and China. The request for "as if" LDC status from the Government of Albania could be taken up at that session, and also the question of the Office for Project Services (OPS).

30. The Executive Director of UNFPA had indicated that she would be willing to have the items relating to UNFPA taken up in May, June or September; however, it would be easier if they were all taken up at the June session. There were a great many documents to be considered at the May session and more time would be available in June; at the annual session, the first week would be devoted to UNDP and the second, to UNFPA, OPS and the Department for Development Support and Management Services.

31. The Board would have to decide whether the annual financial review and audit reports of UNFPA should be taken up in September or June; they would be available in June, if necessary. There would then be a number of papers, mainly concerning financial matters relating to UNDP, to be taken up in September.

32. Mr. NEUMANN (Germany) said that time should be set aside for UNFPA at the May session, so that the Board would have an opportunity to follow the activities of UNFPA over the course of the year.

33. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that the current year was very heavy for UNFPA because of the International Conference on Population and Development; it would therefore be better if the items relating to UNFPA were concentrated at the June session. It would also be easier for national population specialists to attend a single session, rather than two sessions, in May and June.

34. Mr. MICHEL (France) said that the item concerning the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) should be taken up in June since the annual meeting of UNV would be held at Geneva. The items concerning the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and the Humanitarian Programme, should also be taken up at that session; it would then be possible to liaise with Geneva-based humanitarian organizations. That arrangement would alleviate the workload of the May session. Population questions could be taken up in October, rather than at the June session, so that there would be time to assess the results of the International Conference on Population and Development.

35. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that there were only two country programmes, for the Islamic Republic of Iran and Zambia, which concerned both UNDP and UNFPA, and the current year was exceptional because of the International Conference on Population and Development; she therefore supported the proposed organization of work, although she felt that in future years country programmes should be kept together.

36. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) said that it would be an advantage to take up the financial audit reports of both UNDP and UNFPA in September, rather than having one report in June and the other in September, since the same people would be dealing with those issues.

37. Mr. VAN ARENDONK (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that it would be acceptable to UNFPA for its financial audit report to be taken up in September, and also for the UNFPA items to be taken up at the annual session.

38. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that a postmortem on the International Conference on Population and Development could be held in either September or October. Some documents that were to have been taken up at the May session could be moved to the June session. He would consult with colleagues in the United Nations Volunteers, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and the humanitarian programmes to see if they had a particular reason to prefer the May session; he believed that that was true of the United Nations Volunteers.

39. Mr. VAN ARENDONK (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that UNFPA would prefer if most of its agenda was taken up at the annual session because ongoing activities of country programmes could be disrupted if funding was not approved. The UNFPA Review and Assessment study was to be carried out prior to the International Conference on Population and Development; it was therefore important for that paper to be taken up before the Conference. The Board might wish to set aside some time at its September session to consider the outcome of the Conference. It would be difficult for UNFPA if all its agenda was postponed until October.

40. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that since the Board had decided to take up general issues at the annual session, questions of environment and development, humanitarian questions and the human development report should be taken up at the June session because of their special importance.

41. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway) said that the division of labour had been prepared very carefully and should be left as it stood.

42. Ms. DOWSETT (New Zealand) said that the representative of Morocco had made a valid point; on the basis of the rationale for the allocation of items, questions of the environment and of humanitarian programmes should be taken up at the annual session. That would also lighten the agenda of the May session.

43. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) said that the Board should take a flexible approach. A number of issues that were to be considered at the regular sessions might well be taken up at the annual session. The division of labour should be left as it was, with the possibility of fine-tuning it at a later stage.

44. Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago) said that he agreed that the issues to which the representative of Morocco had referred were important, and should be taken up at the annual session; he also agreed that the Board should proceed in a flexible manner, especially in a year of transition. The Board should not rule out the possibility of reverting to items which had been taken up at the May session.

45. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that the Board should rely on the Secretariat to make decisions on the allocation of items on the basis of the content of items. For example, the general aspects of environment and development could be taken up at the annual session, while technical issues could be taken up at the May session.

46. Ms. RIBEIRO VANDERAUWERA (Belgium) said that the three issues referred to by the representative of Morocco were vital for the future role of UNDP and should be considered as a matter of priority at the June session.

47. Mr. CLAVIJO (Observer for Colombia) said that an additional criterion in the allocation of items should be the urgency of the decisions that were required. If urgent decisions were needed on the items of environment and development and humanitarian assistance, those items should be taken up at the May session.

48. Mr. SERSALE di CERISANO (Argentina) said that the questions of environment and development should be taken up at the June session because UNDP would report to the Board on the basis of the meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development in May. In view of the content of resolution 93/11, the item on the humanitarian programme was more concerned with budgetary aspects and could be taken up at the May session.

49. Mr. GRAISSE (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that a revised list of items would be produced, taking into account the views expressed.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.